

ABSTRACT

John D. Farrelly, POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP REFORM IN NORTHEASTERN, NORTH CAROLINA (Under the direction of Dr. James O. McDowelle). Department of Educational Leadership, December 2017.

The purpose of this study was to develop policies to support school leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina. There are many northeastern, North Carolina schools that are in need of school principals who have the ability to lead teaching and learning conditions that result in increased student achievement. Based upon the findings of the analysis of the research data collected from my study participants and information detailed in the review of literature, it was the intention of the study to address the significant challenges in the recruitment of school principals to the public school system through the development of policies designed to improve the recruitment of effective school leaders. These proposed policies contain the following basic components: (a) an increase in overall salary compensation (b) automatic contract extensions based upon merit and (c) signing bonuses based upon regional needs.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP REFORM
IN NORTHEASTERN, NORTH CAROLINA

A Dissertation

Presented to

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by

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IN NORTHEASTERN, NORTH CAROLINA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE.....	i
COPYRIGHT.....	ii
SIGNATURE.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Background and Rationale.....	4
Summary.....	11
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
School Leadership Impact.....	14
Characteristics of Effective School Leaders.....	17
A New Age of Accountability.....	21
Elementary and Secondary Education Act.....	22
A Nation at Risk.....	23
Goals 2000.....	24
No Child Left Behind Act.....	24
Every Student Succeeds Act.....	26
Shortage of Leaders.....	28
Leadership Challenges in North Carolina.....	31
Summary.....	33

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	35
The Critical Need.....	35
Responding to the Problem.....	39
Stakeholder Input and Process.....	39
Participatory Research and Data Analysis.....	40
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS, NEED FOR POLICY AND PROPOSALS.....	42
Presentation of Findings and Data Collection.....	42
Description of Participants.....	42
Analysis of Data.....	42
Policy Proposals.....	55
Policy Recommendation 1.....	56
Policy Recommendation 2.....	57
Policy Recommendation 3.....	58
Policy Recommendation 4.....	58
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION.....	62
Recommendation for Further Research.....	63
Epilogue.....	63
REFERENCES.....	66
APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	80
APPENDIX B: DESIGN MEMO.....	81
APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL.....	82
APPENDIX D: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY.....	83
APPENDIX E: DISSERTATION RESEARCH PRESENTATION.....	85

APPENDIX F: NEW PRINCIPAL SALARY SCHEDULE.....	103
APPENDIX G: PRINCIPAL SALARY SCHEDULE BONUS.....	104
APPENDIX H: LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS.....	105
APPENDIX I: HIRING PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPALS.....	106
APPENDIX J: SINGING BONUSES FOR PRINCIPALS.....	108
APPENDIX K: PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS.....	109

LIST OF TABLES

1. Graduation Rate Comparison.....	6
2. Edgecombe County Percentage of Teacher Turnover vs State, 2015.....	12
3. Quantitative Survey Question 1.....	44
4. Quantitative Survey Question 2.....	45
5. Quantitative Survey Question 3.....	47
6. Quantitative Survey Question 4.....	48
7. Quantitative Survey Question 5.....	49
8. Focus Group Question 3.....	51
9. Focus Group Question 4.....	52
10. Focus Group Question 5.....	54

LIST OF FIGURES

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Per pupil expenditure state of NC vs Edgecombe County, 2003-2017..... | 10 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

School leadership can have a significant impact on student learning outcomes and ultimately alter the course and destiny of lives (Dubrin, 2006). A highly effective school principal can drive teaching and learning efforts to new heights with high velocity, even in the most challenging of school settings. “Given the impact school leadership can have on student outcomes, providing every school with an effective principal should clearly be among the top priorities [for school boards]” (Sun, 2011, p. 4). To the contrary, a poor performing school principal can have an equally damaging effect on student learning, teaching practices and the overall culture of a school (Bogler, 2005). In a study on the importance of school leadership, researchers Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin (2013) found that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principal’s lower achievement by the same amount. When a school is persistently low performing, the impacts can be significant for community stakeholders. Strong school leadership is essential to school reform and improvement efforts. Therefore, the purpose of this problem of practice dissertation is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina.

Previous research has demonstrated that the leadership style of a school principal can strongly influence various elements of the school environment, the attitudes of the classroom teachers and staff, as well as student learning and academic achievement (Bogler, 2005). The role of the school principal is a daunting challenge, particularly in high poverty, low performing schools (Jensen, 2009). Children who live in poverty tend to score lower on standardized tests, receive lower teacher assigned grades and have higher dropout rates (Deforge, 2015). School leaders taking on the challenges that surface in struggling schools can be easily distracted by the

considerable pressures that come with the role and all that it encompasses. Today's leaders need to be well equipped with the instructional, cultural and social acumen it takes to increase school performance while navigating the heavy micro-political pressures that come in today's accountability driven dynamic. School leaders have a charge to focus on challenging goals and foster safe teaching and learning environments where teachers are employing the most effective teaching strategies that support student achievement. This daring proposition takes prowess and a willingness to lead change efforts knowing that resistors can derail improvement efforts. Based on a review of several research studies, Gaziel (2007) declares, "the effective principal comes to fore as an instructional or educational leader who affects the school climate and student achievement" (p. 17). While individual teachers affect a small individual group of students, the school principal impacts all students in a school.

Grissom and Loeb (2009) note the high importance of instructional leadership but expand the definition to include structural leadership skills: "Principals devoting significant time and energy to becoming instructional leaders in their schools are unlikely to see improvement unless they increase their capacity for organizational management as well. Effective instructional leadership combines an understanding of the instructional needs of the school with an ability to target resources where they are needed, hire the best available teachers, provide teachers with the opportunities they need to improve, and keep the school running smoothly (Grissom & Loeb, 2009, p. 32).

There are often several mitigating factors that come into play when trying to determine leadership success factors. Branch et al. (2013) articulate this dynamic, "The fundamental challenge to measuring the impact of school leaders is separating their contributions from the many other factors that drive student achievement. For example, a school that serves largely

affluent families may create the illusion that it has a great principal, when family backgrounds are the key cause of high achievement. Alternatively, “a school that serves disadvantaged students may appear to be doing poorly but in fact have a great principal who is producing better outcomes than any other principal would” (Branch et al., 2013, p. 63). This is especially evident in value added school growth measures that often are the true measure of whether a school is moving in a positive trajectory. Paul D. Houston is even more precise:

Members of the public want to see the achievement gap closed and understand the achievement gap is created outside the schools; however, they believe schools can overcome the ravages of social and economic conditions. While this belief is a vote of confidence for schools when coupled with the recognition that money is the biggest challenge facing schools and is increasingly difficult to find, these expectations could set schools up for failure if they cannot do what society will not do (Rose & Gallup, 2005, p. 50).

Leadership is a key component to any organization’s success but particularly to school environments where teaching and learning conditions are vital to prosperity. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) offered a definition of *leadership* that recapitulates their findings: “Leadership is all about organizational improvement; more specifically, it is about establishing agreed-upon and worthwhile directions of the organization in question, and doing whatever it takes to prod and support people in those directions” (p. 9). Having a vision for what success looks like is vital, especially in significant change efforts. However, having the guile, foresight and wisdom to see those efforts through while building leadership capacity and human capital is even more paramount. In short, effective leadership is multidimensional and a necessary component to school turnaround efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED) defines the Problem of Practice as “[t]he process of posing significant questions that focus on complex problems of practice. By using various research, theories, and professional wisdom, scholarly practitioners design innovative solutions to address the problems of practice” (“Carnegie”, 2016). At the center of this Problem of Practice is a policy study. “Policy research involves using evidence to understand the causes and consequences of problems and the advantages, disadvantages, and risks of different ways of dealing with problems” (Majchrzak, 2014, p. 2). Therefore, the purpose of this Problem of Practice is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina.

Background and Rationale

The Edgecombe County Public Schools System (ECPS) is located in a rural low- wealth eastern North Carolina community where the poverty rate is over 70%. The district currently serves approximately 6,200 students in 14 schools. The district consists of four high schools, four middle schools, five elementary schools, and a K-8 global school. Of those students, 11% are enrolled in the Exceptional Children’s Program, 8.4% are identified as Academically Gifted, 4.6% are identified as Limited English Proficient and 79.87% of all students in Edgecombe County qualify for free and reduced lunch. The ethnic makeup of students in the district is 57% Black, 33.7% white, 6.6% Hispanic, 1.7% Multi-racial (“Public Schools”, n.d.).

Many students enter Edgecombe County Public Schools with a *stacked deck* of challenges that require extensive and intensive educational supports. School readiness, literacy rates and the significant number of African American males below grade level are

among the formidable challenges the school district faces. Students across the district are coming from impoverished homes as evidenced by 10 of the 14 schools qualifying for Title 1 low income funding (“Public Schools”, n.d.). In the 2016-17 academic year, 7 ECPS schools were designated with low performing status as identified by the North Carolina General Assembly (“Public Schools”, 2016).

Edgecombe County is an economically distressed county with one of the highest unemployment rates (14.5%) in the state (8.8%). Historically dependent on tobacco, textiles, small business, and the light industrial manufacturing, there has been an economic decline for several years (“U.S. Department of Labor”, n.d.). Economic changes during the past two to three decades have changed the face of the community but the paradigm shift required of many of the residents has failed to keep up with the speed of change essential to maintain the economic prosperity once apparent in this region of North Carolina. Economically, the community is struggling with not only attracting business and industry but also with filling open positions with qualified employees at entry and higher levels. To be competitive in a rapidly changing world, Edgecombe County Public School students must receive an education that is significantly different from that of their parents and even many of their teachers.

Academic indicators in the school system have been unsatisfactory for many years. Although many schools have seen significant statistical growth in value added student growth data, the district lags behind state averages in areas of reading, math and science (“Public Schools”, n.d.). Furthermore, the current high school graduation rate of 79% (see Table 1) above the state average is a primary K-12 goal.

More striking in many ways to the significant academic challenges have been the obstacles in providing schools with effective leaders. Historic recruiting efforts have been

Table 1

Graduation Rate Comparison

Subgroup	Edgecombe County	State of North Carolina
All students	79	86
Male	73	83
Female	84	89
Black	80	83
Hispanic	76	80
2+ Races	67	83
White	78	89
Economically Disadvantaged	72	81
Disabled	67	69
Gifted	92	95

mediocre as the district has done little to take the necessary systemic steps to create conditions for success, growth and retainment of exemplar staff members. Further, an educational economic disparity exists in counties such as Edgecombe where administrative supplements are often much lower compared to suburban areas in North Carolina (“NCDPI”, 2016). The financial draw to lure high performing school leaders does not exist in Edgecombe County. In order to drive needed change efforts, providing every school in Edgecombe County with effective leaders is top priority. Investigators Louis et al. (2010) amalgamate the velocity that visionary leaders can have on school settings:

In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. After six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership. Why is the leadership crucial? One explanation is that leaders have the potential to unleash latent capacities in organizations (Louis et al., 2010, p. 9).

Edgecombe County is in effect, a microcosm of many rural school districts in north eastern, North Carolina with high poverty rates (“Public Schools”, n.d.). Many schools are low performing, with constant adult turnover and an overall lack of instructional resources (“Public Schools”, 2016). The ability to effectively address student learning needs is often thwarted by the dollar sign (“U.S. Department of Education”, 2011). In the end, children are ones who suffer. The negative outcomes for children are vast and perpetual. When schools fail to provide children with a sound, fundamental education, they are robbing them of the ability to compete in the classroom and beyond. Low performing schools and incompetent leaders are reducing the chances of children having an ability to lead rewarding and productive lives. Fundamental

change in the recruitment of effective school leaders is critical to short and long term success in closing student achievement gaps.

With state cuts and the abolishment of North Carolina's highly successful Preschool Program, "More at Four", many communities in north eastern, North Carolina have persistent school readiness threats ("NC Policy Watch", 2015). One of the most damaging effects of starting behind in school is that the readiness gap grows exponentially as children grow older. Children from high poverty homes can feel less secure, often powerless and sometimes angry at our social failures to attend to their struggles. Children from low income families are more likely to have lower test scores and are at higher risk for dropping out of school (Jensen, 2009). For those that do complete their high school education, they are still less likely to attend college or a four-year university. The effects of poverty on education call for leadership that can transform classrooms, schools and communities so that the cycles of generational poverty can be broken.

The demonstrated overwhelming need for supplemental funding to assist at-risk student populations doesn't exist to the level necessary to overcome local economic hurdles. While the state of North Carolina provides additional *Low Wealth* funding to impoverished districts, a competitive *imbalance* still remains. At the heart of many local economic issues are the inability of local economies to provide leveled ADM (Average Daily Membership) funding for all students. An example of this comes from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The North Carolina county average for local per-pupil expenditure in daily membership in 2014-15 was \$2,027 per student ("NCDPI", 2016). The local per-pupil expenditure in Edgecombe County in the same time frame was \$948 per student. In addition, in a 14-year period from 2003-2017, the funding gap widened in comparing the average state per-pupil expenditure vs. Edgecombe County (see Figure 1). Further, the lack of local funding to support the education of

students has ranked ECPS in the bottom 5 counties in the state of North Carolina over the past 10 years (“NCDPI”, 2016).

The harsh reality is that at-risk students generally need a wealth of more educational and financial support. An almost *double down* effect of support is needed to impact students who are significantly below grade level. Chronic socioeconomic deprivation can create home and school environments that undermine the development of self and the capacity for self-efficacy. Compared with their more affluent peers, at risk children form more stress-ridden attachments with parents, teachers, and adult caregivers and have difficulty establishing rewarding friendships with children their own age. In rural areas, there are more single-guardian households, and families often have less access to services, support for disabilities, mental health support and quality education opportunities (Jensen, 2009). When high poverty communities do not have the local tax base to support proper funding of schools, children ultimately suffer the consequences.

Immense teacher turnover rates also plague many north eastern, North Carolina School districts (“Report, 2016). High teacher turnover rates create an unsettling effect on student achievement and can tear at the fabric of the attempts to build sustained leadership capacity in a school. It can have a negative impact on school cultures and be a bane to progress. High teacher turnover can also have a significant negative effect on reform efforts, professional development, and providing support systems for school faculty (Guin, 2004). Studies suggest that students in grade levels with higher turnover score lower in both English language arts (ELA) and math and that these effects are particularly strong in schools with more low-performing and black students (Ronfeldt, Loeb, &Wyckoff, 2013). Schools with chronic teacher turnover tend to have higher

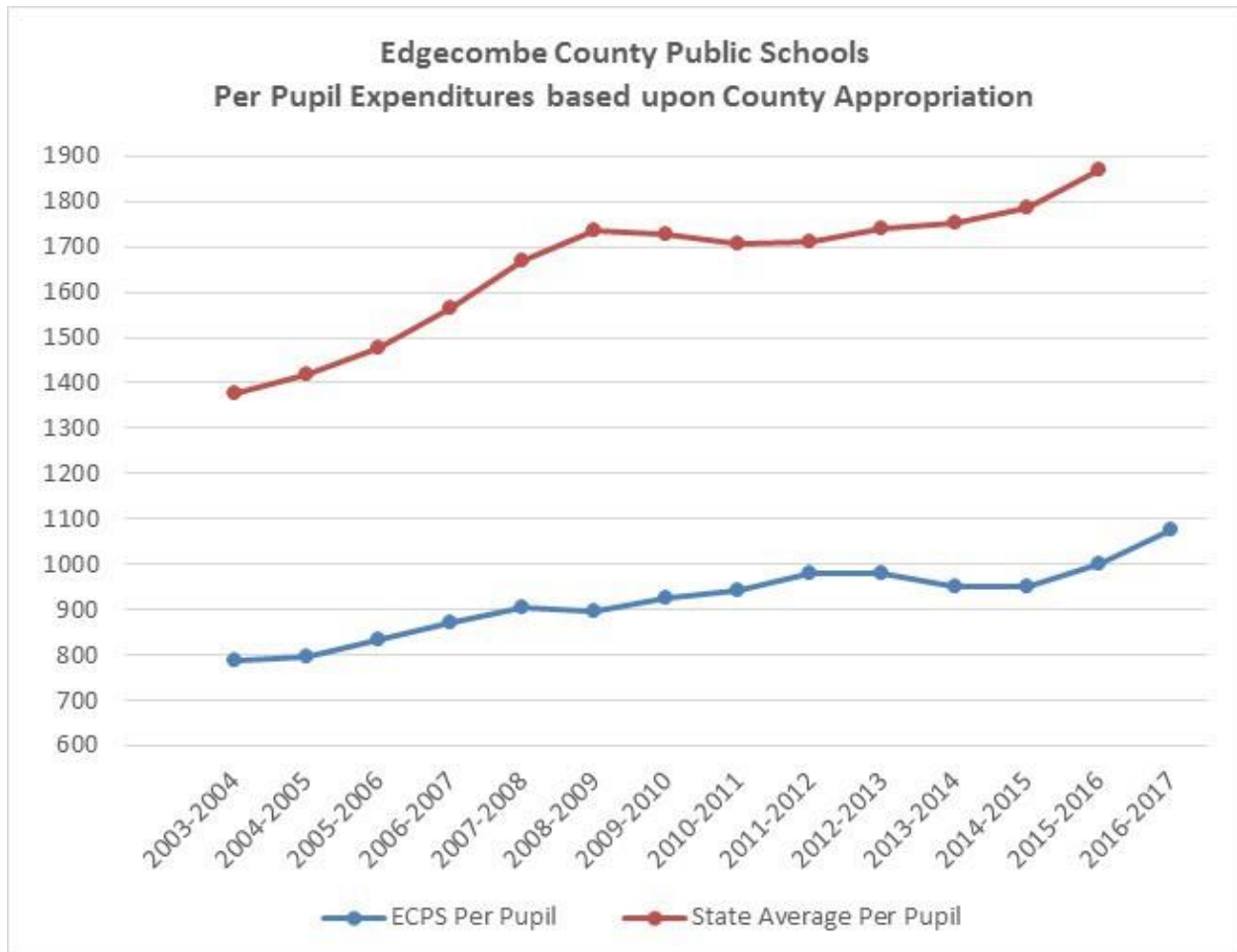


Figure 1. Per pupil expenditure state of NC vs Edgecombe County, 2003-2017.

minority enrollments. Students in schools with high rates of teacher turnover may score lower on standardized tests (Guin, 2004).

High teacher turnover in northeastern, North Carolina is one of the many negative outcomes of the inability of districts to recruit, grow and invest in school leadership. (“Report”, 2016). In 2015-16 four of the five highest teacher turnover rates in the state of North Carolina came from north eastern, North Carolina School Districts (“Report”, 2016). Further, in a disturbing trend specific to ECPS, the teacher turnover rate has been among the highest in the state for over a decade. In 2015 the ECPS teacher turnover rate was more than double the state average at the elementary and middle school levels (see Table 2). The absence of effective leadership in a school can often lead to chaotic working environments and a lack of opportunities for stakeholders to flourish. To the contrary, an effective leader can recruit and grow talent while harvesting the culture of a school. An investment in growing human capital can have a direct relationship on student achievement results. High teacher turnover can be correlated to both improvement and decline in the quality of instruction (Guin, 2004).

School leadership, after instructional quality, is the most significant school-related contributor to what and how much students learn at school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The investment in providing every northeastern, North Carolina school with a high quality leader is an essential component to tackling the heavy number of academic challenges that dwell in this part of the state. Without a formal plan to address school leadership disparities, schools will continue to fail, economies will suffer and the equity gap widens.

Summary

There are many northeastern, North Carolina schools that are in need of school principals who have the ability to lead teaching and learning conditions that result in increased student

Table 2

Edgecombe County Percentage of Teacher Turnover vs. State, 2015

	Elementary	Middle	High
Edgecombe County	27	38	10
State of NC	13	15	15

achievement. School leaders can exert a powerful influence on student outcomes and influence learning by helping to promote vision and goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Strong school leadership is essential to school reform and turnaround efforts. Leadership is a key component to any organization's success but particularly to school environments where teaching and learning conditions are vital to prosperity. There is high need to recruit and retain galvanizing leaders in low performing schools and to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

School Leadership Impact

The impact that school leaders can have on a community are far reaching. An example of this importance is highlighted in a report by the Southern Regional Education Board where it's suggested that "a principal can impact the lives of anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand students during the year" (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011, p. 2). A principal is a central figure with wide ranging influence on others. A South Carolina study of teachers identified school leadership as the most critical working condition they considered when making decisions about whether to stay at a school. The research also revealed that this element was a significant predictor of teacher retention (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2007).

Case studies of *turn around* schools and of interventions into teaching and learning invariably credit school and district leadership with considerable responsibility for school and teaching effectiveness (Edmonds, 1979; Maden, 2001; Scheurich, 1998). In this light, research that focused on measures of student achievement held increasing salience for policymakers (Glasman & Heck, 1992). The Wallace Foundation has featured several in-depth studies on educational leadership, with a distinct focus on the role of the school principal. In addition to funding projects in 28 states and innumerable school districts within them, Wallace has released more than 70 research reports and publications featuring school leadership, on topics ranging from how principals are trained to how they are evaluated on the job. As a result of this work, a great deal has been learned about the nature of the school principal's role, measures of principal effectiveness and how to link principal effectiveness to improved student achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2011).

In one of several recent studies identifying school leadership as a key factor in schools that outperform others with similar students, researchers found that achievement levels were higher in schools where principals undertake and lead a school reform process, act as managers of school improvement, cultivate the school's vision and make use of student data to support instructional practices and to provide assistance to struggling students (Williams, Kirst, & Haertel, 2005).

The effectiveness of a school and its leader increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success. Researchers Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) authored a meta-analysis that involved 69 studies involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers. In the study they computed the correlation between the leadership behavior of the principal in a school and the average academic achievement of students in the school to be .25.

The considerable correlation is explained in greater detail: To interpret the .25 correlation, consider that a principal is assigned to a school that is at the 50th percentile in average achievement of its students. Also assume that the principal is at the same percentile in leadership ability. Assuming that the principal stays in the school for a couple of years, the .25 correlation indicates over time that the average achievement of the school remains at the 50th percentile.

However, when the principal's leadership ability is increased by one standard deviation—from the 50th percentile to the 84th percentile, the predicted achievement growth rises to the 60th percentile. In terms of the average achievement of students in the school, this is substantial (Marzano et al., 2005). This quantitative meta-analysis powerfully supports the critical role of effective school leadership.

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Leadership influence is a person's ability to shape and mold outcomes. Investigators Branch et al. (2013) have focused on the effectiveness of the principal and the paramount role that they play on school performance outcomes. Teachers affect only their students, however, while principals affect all students in a school. The overall impact from increasing principal quality therefore substantially exceeds the benefit from a comparable increase in the quality of a single teacher. An essential path whereby a principal can improve results is by increasing the human capital in the teaching staff. This can be achieved by improving the quality of teaching with current staff or through effectively transitioning to more effective teachers. Highly rated principals are more successful both at retaining effective teachers and at transitioning out less effective ones. Less effective principals struggle in raising the quality of their teaching staffs.

Characteristics of Effective School Leaders

The importance of leadership to school and instructional improvement has been well documented (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles, ranging from educational visionaries and change agents to instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Largely overlooked in the various reform movements of the past two decades, principals are now regarded as central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students, rather than merely maintaining the status quo (Peterson, 2002).

There are several key practices that set great leaders apart. The Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model contains 24 categories of principal actions and behaviors. These 24 categories are organized into five domains: (1) a data-driven focus on student achievement, (2) continuous

improvement of instruction, (3) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (4) cooperation and collaboration, and (5) school climate (Marzano et al., 2005).

Similar to the aforementioned domains, the Wallace Foundation (2011) has formed specific key practices that describe what it is that effective principals do. In essence they believe that effective principals perform five key practices well:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students.
- Creating a climate hospitable to education.
- Cultivating leadership in others.
- Improving instruction.
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

There is now widespread agreement among educational reformers and researchers that the primary role of the principal is to align all aspects of schooling to support the goal of improving instruction so that all children are successful (e.g., Elmore & Burney, 1999; Peterson, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Principals of high achieving schools established clear learning goals as they engaged in “assertive, achievement –oriented leadership” (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982, p. 334). Highly effective leaders create data rich cultures focused on individual teacher and student learning data. Improving instruction is nearly impossible without the use of specific metrics. When focusing on the data, it “helps keep discussions of instruction on a fairly high level, where teachers don’t take it as personal criticism” (Chenoweth, 2009, p. 135). By focusing on data, teachers and schools are always looking at ways to improve student achievement and instruction. For schools to see improvement, they must work “collaboratively rather than in isolation. They developed common assessments and applied consistent standards rather than acting autonomously” (DuFour,

DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004, p. 138). Principals at highly effective schools have created an intervention system that increases the level of intensity based on each student's needs. Students move in and out of those levels or tiers based on monitoring (Campsen, 2012).

Instructional leaders develop and communicate school goals, coordinate and supervise the school curriculum, monitor and evaluate student progress, and provide incentives for teachers and students (Hallinger, 2003; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). Principals of high achieving schools established clear learning goals as they engaged in "assertive, achievement –oriented leadership" (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982, p. 334).

Rick Stiggins (2008) argues that clear academic standards or learning goals form an essential structural foundation for a balanced assessment system. According to Stiggins (2008), learning goals best serve the information needs of all stakeholders, including students, when they are:

- Focused on the truly important learnings of the subject of study
- Clearly and completely woven into learning progressions within and across all grades
- Precisely defined so that all educators can interpret them consistently
- Created within the developmental reach of the students who are to master them
- Designed to be manageable given the teacher's available resources and students' ability to learn
- Thoroughly mastered by the designated teachers (p. 6)

Situational leadership is a highly desired and necessary trait to have to be an effective principal. The extent to which a principal "is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems is critical" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4). This affect may be the greatest attribute that a principal can

possess. “The principal’s job is complex and multidimensional, and the effectiveness of principals depends, in part, on...how they allocate their time across daily responsibilities” (Rice 2010, p. 2) However, the most effective leadership style would require less command and control, more learning and leading, less dictating, and more orchestrating (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

Setting a vision that ensures that each student achieves intellectual and personal excellence in conditions where they can flourish is of utmost importance. A report from Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) highlights the value in setting a vision:

Effective school leaders know how to focus the work of the school on the essential. They have a clear mission or purpose for the school and identify goals that align with that mission. They communicate the purpose and goals in a meaningful way such that all stakeholders understand what they need to do. (McIver, Kearns, Lyons, & Sussman, 2009, p. 12)

Leithwood and Jantzi’s (2005) review suggests that the most critical areas of focus by school leaders include: (1) setting direction, by developing a consensus around vision, goals, and direction; (2) helping individual teachers, through support, modeling, and supervision; (3) redesigning the organization to foster collaboration and engage families and community; and (4) managing the organization by strategically allocating resources and support. A review by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) adds to this list the development of collective teacher capacity and engagement.

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform (2005) suggests that successful principals focus on three core practices for improving student achievement: (a) setting the direction of a

school, (b) developing talent, and (c) redesigning the organization. Additionally, several specific leadership practices and dimensions are identified as core practices that support goal attainment. Stimulating teachers intellectually and providing them with individualized support leads to increasing leadership capacity and ultimately improved performance outcomes. Building collaborative processes with distributive leadership methods builds sustained capacity, buy in and a sense of purpose. The ability to empower others is a unique trait in exemplar leaders.

Developing talent is a key driver and a critical area of focus for successful school leaders. In order to change an organization and increase its capacity to produce greater results, the people within the organization must change and increase their capacity (Flanary, 2011). Significant school change efforts begin with leaders who create a shared vision for success and have high expectations. Effective school leaders clearly demonstrate that capacity building is a priority for every adult in the school including themselves. Setting an example of authentic self-development can begin to build a teacher leadership culture that can flourish. According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), “teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. Such team leadership work involves three intentional development foci: individual development, collaboration or team development, and organizational development” (pp. 287-288).

A New Age of Accountability

National trends over the past two decades have paved the way for more educational accountability and thus, a changing more demanding role of the school leader. Along with higher expectations in this new era, school leadership ranks extremely high on the list of educational reform priorities across the country. A major reason for the interest in the links between

leadership and student outcomes is the desire of policy makers in many sectors to reduce the persistent disparities in educational outcomes between various social and ethnic groups, and their trust that school leaders play a pivotal role in doing so (Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development, 2001). Federal and state mandates such as No Child Left Behind have dictated a higher stakes leadership environment that calls for different leadership skills, abilities and practices. Gone are the days where principals were school managers; in are the robust leaders who are the game changers and accountable for results. Unfortunately, those visionary pioneers are often few and far between. It is a polarizing position that calls for guile, courage, skill and an ability to deliver on a moral responsibility to put all students in a position to be successful.

An increased emphasis on accountability measures has created a broader demand on principal evaluation. Between 1975 and 1990, the number of states with state-mandated principal evaluation increased from 9 to 40 (Snyder & Ebmeier, 1992). State, national, and international investments in in-service training of principals increased during this period (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy, 1990). In 1996, a consortium of states, the Interstate Leadership Licensing Consortium (ISLLC), translated the new leadership expectations into standards for principal preparation and licensing to guide pre-service programs and, in some states, new assessments for principal licensing.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

President Lyndon B. Johnson initially signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law in 1965 during his War on Poverty campaign. He “believed that ‘full educational opportunity’ should be ‘our first national goal’” (“U.S. Dept. of Education”, n.d., para. 1). The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the nation’s national education law and shows a longstanding pledge to equal opportunity for all students. ESEA authorized

state-run programs for eligible schools and districts eager to raise the academic achievement of struggling learners and address the complex challenges that arise for students who live with disability, mobility problems, learning difficulties, poverty, or transience, or who need to learn English. Poverty and disparities in social and economic opportunity are at the root of gaps in academic achievement (Economic Policy Institute, 2015). While setting high ESEA substantial standards for all students is important, failing to lay the necessary instructional leadership foundation for success, particularly in high poverty schools, is more likely to widen learning gaps rather than narrow them. While the intent of ESEA was to close those gaps with its emphasis on results, it created greater pressures for administrators. Further, it was not coupled with a comprehensive approach to cultivating successful leaders. In January 2002, President George W. Bush reauthorized ESEA and renamed it No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

A Nation at Risk

A “Nation at Risk” was an educational reform report in 1983 authored by President Ronald Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education. Its publication is considered a landmark event in modern American educational history. However, its impact was minimal. Owens (2004) states: “The lack of success was due to the fact that the top down reform efforts failed to consider “altering the central core of assumptions and structures... of schools” (p. 220). According to Datnow and Stringfield (2000) “we know that the improvement of schools is possible when the reform effort is well thought out, when teachers are active agents in the change process, when there are sufficient resources and time to support reform, when capable leadership is present, and when school cultures change along with school structures” (p. 184). The Nation at Risk recommendations primarily centered on instructional content, standards, time

in school, teaching and fiscal support. Identified principal leadership skills involved persuasion, setting goals, managerial and supervisory skills but did not include instructional leadership.

Goals 2000

"The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227)" was signed into law on March 31, 1994 by President Bill Clinton. The Act intended to provide resources to states and communities with the hopes of ensuring that all students reach their full potential. Knudsen and Morrisette (1999) state, "when carefully examined, it appears that these objectives were designed without fully understanding social factors that influence American families and schools. Without the necessary support systems in place, such grandiose goals cannot be realized and reform will not be forthcoming" (Knudsen & Morrisette, 1999, para. 35). The tenets of Goals 2000 included drug free schools, expecting all children including those from poor and disadvantaged homes to be school ready and unrealistic competencies and standards. While the goals are admirable, there were no foundational leadership structures deployed to build a comprehensive plan for leadership success.

No Child Left Behind Act

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, President George W. Bush's education-reform bill, was signed into law on January 8, 2002. At the time it is the most sweeping education-reform legislation since 1965, when President Lyndon B. Johnson passed his landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act. No Child Left Behind's intent was to hold states responsible for testing, accountability, and school improvement. In addition, it also emphasized that students should be grade-level proficient in reading and math by 2014 and schools were required to meet adequate yearly progress towards this proficiency goal. In 2011, President Barack Obama allowed states to apply for a waiver to grant flexibility in meeting some of

NCLB's requirements. "Individual schools, school districts and states must publicly report test results in the aggregate and for specific student subgroups, including low-income students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and major racial and ethnic groups" (New America Foundation, 2014, para. 4). NCLB has required public reporting of test score results by race and thus, has exposed the lack of focus on educational equity. While NCLB emphasized results, it in effect had little to do with helping schools to improve. Boykin and Noguera (2011) expound: "Despite the fact that NCLB was frequently portrayed as a means to ensure that the most impoverished children would be better served by our nation's schools, the law has not led to significant improvements in schools where poor and disadvantaged children are concentrated" (p. 140).

According to Hill and Harvey (2004), the truth is that after two decades of well-publicized effort, public school districts in the United States are performing about where they were in the 1980s, particularly those systems in urban areas. "When progress can be discerned, it is fragmentary, fragile, and confined almost exclusively to the elementary school years. Middle schools have barely changed at all, and high schools have become the black hole of reform, into which good ideas are sucked, never to be seen again (Hill & Harvey, 2004, p. 1).

Along with a significant increase in public reporting measures came new individual district, school and principal accountability metrics that have changed the role and evaluative assessment of school leaders. Branch et al. (2013) illustrates how the focus across the nation on principal impact continues to become crystal clear: "It is widely believed that a good principal is the key to a successful school. No Child Left Behind encouraged the replacement of the principal in persistently low-performing schools, and the Obama administration has made this a requirement for schools undergoing federally funded turnarounds" (Branch et al., 2013, p. 1).

While the intent of federal mandates was to increase accountability there was not a conscious effort on investigating the importance of principal quality for student outcomes or the specific practices that cause some principals to be more successful than others.

The Center for American Progress (2011) opines that both federal and state government stakeholders have roles in the process of developing instructional leaders:

“While defining and evaluating principal effectiveness is not sufficient to ensuring strong leadership, it is a critical step to creating a coherent, statewide vision of effective school leadership that can inform other policies. States will also need to use these systems to drive all aspects of their human capital systems- from certification to compensation to professional development” (p. 1).

The legislative expectation intended to reduce the achievement gap and insure all students test proficient in the core subject areas by 2014 is a standard that few schools will be able to achieve (Wiley, Mathis, & Garcia, 2005). Additionally, principals are faced with increased responsibilities related to marketing their schools, political involvement in generating financial support, involvement with social service agencies in meeting the needs of students, working with site-based councils within their schools, and sound fiscal decision making (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Every Student Succeeds Act

The House of Representatives as well as the Senate have recently passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA holds states and school districts accountable for the growth of all students and preserves resources for students at risk, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, homeless children, migrant children, and neglected children.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the bill will assist in ensuring educational equity by:

- a. Holding all students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers.
- b. Ensuring accountability by guaranteeing that when students fall behind states redirect resources into what works to help them and their schools improve, with a particular focus on the very lowest-performing schools, high schools with high dropout rates, and schools with achievement gaps.
- c. Empowering state and local decision-makers to develop their own strong systems for school improvement based upon evidence, rather than imposing cookie-cutter federal solutions like the No Child Left Behind Act.
- d. Reducing the often onerous burden of testing on students and teachers, asking sure that tests don't crowd out teaching and learning, without sacrificing clear, annual information parents and educators need to make sure children are learning.
- e. Providing more children access to high-quality preschool.
- f. Establishing new resources for proven strategies that will spur reform and drive opportunity and better outcomes for America's students. (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 3)

While the mounting measures of school accountability and testing have greatly affected various stakeholders, the school principal has carried the brunt of those higher expectations. Researcher Johnson (2009) reports: According to our surveys of principals, 75% report that they spend more time "than they used to when it comes to working on the substance of teaching—for example, curriculum, teaching techniques, mentoring, and professional development" (Johnson,

2009, p. 73). The amount of focus on instructional time however, doesn't alone ensure principal effectiveness, improved results or systems that identify effective leaders based on student achievement. While defining and evaluating principal effectiveness is not enough to ensure strong leadership, it is a critical needed step to creating rigorous measures of outcomes and practices. Greater accountability measures in the United States doesn't ensure improved results but it does ensure a greater need for exemplar leadership.

Shortage of Leaders

While a national estimate of demand in 2002 set the proportion of principal vacancies over the upcoming 5-year period at 60% (Peterson, 2002), districts were already reporting growing shortages. Analyses of principal shortages have identified the pressures of new accountability systems, expanding responsibilities, reforms removing principal tenure, and inadequate compensation as some of the factors discouraging individuals who are certified for administration from seeking or remaining in principalships (Wallace, 2007). Mounting micro-political challenges also play a role in the administrative pipeline shortage. Several studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions (Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2001). The role of today's principal has become diverse and increasingly complex. Low compensation, long hours, and stress on the job continue to be factors which principals find to be discouraging (NAESP, 1998). Winter, Rinehart, and Munoz (2002) found, candidates' self-perceptions of their ability to do the job were the strongest predictor of their willingness to apply for a principalship, pointing to the importance of training that builds prospective principals' skills and sense of self-efficacy.

Several studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions (Farkas et al., 2001). This is particularly in Northeastern, North Carolina where working conditions are a heavy consideration for aspiring leaders given the significant number of districts with high poverty, low performing schools that descend upon almost every county. The North Carolina General Assembly joined more than a dozen other states in 2014 in adopting A-F school letter grades for schools. Of the nearly 30% of North Carolina Schools receiving letter grades of D or F from the state, almost all of them are designated as high poverty schools (Wagner, 2015). The work is extremely difficult and tenuous at best. A commitment to true change efforts and the courage to not only have a vision for change but to see it through is not for everyone. Aspiring and practicing principals are frequently ill-prepared and inadequately supported to take on the challenging work of instructional leadership and school improvement. The quality of the preparation experience appears to be related to the willingness of potential candidates to take on this tough job, as well as their ability to survive and succeed in it (Wallace, 2007).

The shortage on leaders has many impacts on student outcomes and quite often on the talent or lack thereof in the teaching force. Select the right school leader and great teachers will come and stay. Pick the wrong one and, over time, good teachers leave, mediocre ones stay, and the school gradually (or not so gradually) declines. Reversing the impact of a poor principal can take years (Cerf, as cited in Mitgang, 2008, p. 3). In support of this concept, McGuigan (2009) states, "if the daily actions of principals make a difference in student academic achievement, schools can be improved by improving or replacing principals" (p. 2). Reformers argue, recruiting the right people, preparing them comprehensively, and supporting them as they lead

schools is essential to improve the pool of available school leaders, decrease turnover in the principalship, and foster stability and reform in schools, which in turn is needed to foster the development of students' abilities (Wallace, 2007).

Hiring an effective principal can be a daunting challenge because a candidate's leadership ability in a local school is difficult to gauge. According to a nationally representative survey, superintendents report that hiring new school principals is highly challenging (Farkas, Johnson, Duffet, & Folero, 2001). Although many states now test prospective principals, the instruments are best used as summative assessments of new principals' acquisition of certain skills, and their predictive power for principal job success is unclear (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Leading change in a school often necessitates a multi-year investment. Stable leadership matters. Keeping school leaders in place for multiple years—and improving their performance—has a positive effect on student outcomes, particularly in high-poverty schools. It takes principals an average of five years to put a vision in place for a school, improve instructional quality and fully implement policies and practices that positively affect a school's performance (Van Cleef, 2015). Schools that don't retain principals beyond this point will often inevitably struggle to find a path to meaningful change.

The poorest schools, urban and rural alike, face perennial challenges in attracting enough well-qualified leaders. Consequently, policies that focus on recruitment without taking on principal retention address only a small part of the problem. Low-income schools have a higher percentage of new teachers, a lower percentage of certified teachers, and more teachers with weaker education backgrounds than high-income schools do (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). High-poverty schools often face multiple disadvantages in attracting and keeping qualified leaders. School districts can help land strong candidates and match them appropriately

with positions in high-poverty schools by making timely job offers and involving schools in hiring decisions (David, 2008). Districts can also help high-poverty schools obtain the resources and assistance needed to support their teachers and leaders better.

Leadership Challenges in North Carolina

North Carolina ranks 50th in the nation, including Washington, DC, for principal pay. Under the state's pay structure, some teachers are paid more than assistant principals (Hinchcliffe, 2016). The lack of salary for administrators significantly handicaps recruitment and retention efforts across the state. This combined with the lack of financial resources to pay administrators competitive supplements in high poverty Northeastern, North Carolina counties serves as a draconian effect in hiring leaders for low performing schools. The issue is not only one of low principal salaries, but that the pay differential between principals and experienced teachers in the building is often negligible (Hinchcliffe, 2016). Therefore, the monetary benefits of serving as a principal often don't outweigh the additional time commitments and stress associated with the position.

Principal turnover is also a major hurdle affecting North Carolina Schools. Miller (2009) found that half of North Carolina principals left their schools within four years. The average school during the 12 years of her study was led by approximately three different principals. There was substantial variation across schools in the number of principal transitions; some schools had a single principal, while others had seven principals. A growing body of research denotes that a high level of principal turnover presents critical challenges for schools and that the stability of the principal provides continuity to school improvement efforts when principals remain in a school for at least five years. Fuller and Young (2009) found that when principals leave after a year or two, major school improvement efforts are less likely to succeed. Weinstein

and colleagues (2009) noted that in many school districts, principal positions often serve as a rotating position in which a new principal is placed at a school for two or three years before being moved to a different school in the district or promoted to a position in the district's central administration.

Research suggests a link between principal stability and student outcomes (Branch et al., 2009). Miller (2009) examined the relationship between principal transitions and student test scores (statewide reading comprehension and mathematics tests at the elementary level and end-of-grade tests at the middle school level) in North Carolina schools. She found that principal transitions were associated with changes in student achievement. Test scores in the first two years of a new principal's tenure were low, compared both to prior scores under the old principal and ensuing scores under the new principal. Student performance began to increase, returning to pre-transition levels, by the end of the fourth year under the new principal.

Fuller and Young (2009) reported that principals in rural and small town districts had slightly higher turnover rates than principals in suburban or urban districts. They found very little difference in retention rates between schools in urban, suburban affluent, and suburban poor districts.

A survey of over 900 randomly selected public school principals conducted by Public Agenda found that 97% of the respondents agreed that increasing the pay and prestige of school administrators would be an effective way to improve leadership in the nation's schools (Farkas et al., 2001). Researchers have summarized that additional compensation may be especially important for retaining principals at the most challenging schools (Mitgang, 2003). Further, most analysts believe the incentives need to be substantial before they have an impact on principal recruitment and retention at hard-to-staff schools. Hanushek and colleagues (2001), for example, estimated

that the differential would have to be as much as 20 to 50% over comparable positions at higher-performing, less challenging schools.

Summary

The effectiveness of a school leader increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success as research demonstrates that a principal can impact the lives of anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand students during the year. Case studies of *turn around* schools and of interventions into teaching and learning invariably credit school and district leadership with considerable responsibility for school and teaching effectiveness. Highly skilled principals are now regarded as central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students. The elements of effective school leadership revolve around the prioritization of teaching and learning through a shared vision of leadership. There are several key practices that set great leaders apart including building the capacity of every adult in a school including themselves.

A new age of accountability has dominated the educational realm in the last two decades as policy and regulatory reforms have led to a greater emphasis on testing, results and leadership performance. These legislative decrees have had a direct impact on the changing role of the principal and on the leadership skills now necessary to be successful. Along with a significant increase in public reporting measures came new individual district, school and principal accountability metrics that have changed the role and evaluative assessment of school leaders.

They have also inhibited recruitment efforts in the leadership profession. Mounting micro- political challenges and pressures play a role in the administrative pipeline shortage. Further, several studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track

record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions. The literature demonstrates that policy reform efforts are necessary to overcome the glaring leadership recruitment hurdles that exist across the country but particularly in high poverty schools.

North Carolina ranks 50th in the nation for principal pay. The lack of salary for administrators significantly handicaps recruitment and retention efforts across the state. This coupled with the lack of financial resources to pay administrators competitive supplements stifles high poverty Northeastern, North Carolina counties in recruiting leaders. Principal turnover is also a major hurdle affecting North Carolina Schools. Studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The methodology chosen for this problem of practice is policy development. The purpose of this problem of practice dissertation is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina. Ann Majchrzak and M. Lynne Markus in their text *Methods for Policy Research: Taking Socially Responsible Action*, serves as the guide for the development of the evidence- based policies that I propose are needed. “Policy research involves using evidence to understand the causes and consequences of problems and the advantages, disadvantages, and risks of different ways of dealing with problems” (Majchrzak, 2014, p. 2).

The Critical Need

The need for state policy reform when it comes to school leadership development is critical. The 2007 Wallace study depicts how policies play a critical role in supporting a district’s ability to create a strong instructional environment and in enabling principals to support teaching and learning. This effect occurs in part through a state’s general approach to funding, regulating, and supporting education, for example, by creating thoughtful and coherent standards, curriculum, assessment, and support systems focused on important kinds of learning. State policies also affect the ways in which the state supports, organizes, and manages professional learning (pre-service and in-service) for school leaders and for teachers. Wallace (2007) highlights national research that depicts how states, districts, and other funders are developing policy and investing resources to improve strategic leadership development for both new and experienced school leaders (Sanders & Simpson, 2005). In recent years, state requirements, national accreditation recognition, and other policy factors have influenced program improvement and redesign work.

Children living in poverty in the United States face some of life's greatest challenges, including the challenge of achieving academic success in school. High academic achievement by students in marginalized communities is generally not what occurs in the majority of public schools across the United States (Woods, 2012). The negative outcomes for children are vast and perpetual. Research shows those who live in poverty in the US as children complete fewer years of schooling, work fewer hours, earn lower wages, and are less healthy (Children's Defense Fund, 2012).

When schools fail to provide children with a sound, fundamental education, they are robbing them of the ability to compete in the classroom and beyond. Poor schools and incompetent leaders are reducing the chances of children having an ability to lead rewarding and productive lives. Fundamental change in the recruitment of effective school leaders is critical to short and long term success in closing achievement gaps. The effects of poverty on education call for leadership that can transform classrooms, schools and communities so that the cycles of generational poverty can be broken.

Many Northeastern, North Carolina Public Schools are low performing, with constant adult turnover and an overall lack of instructional resources ("Public Schools", 2016). In 2013, the NC General Assembly passed the Excellent Public Schools Act as part IX of its Appropriations Act of 2013. Grades are based on each school's achievement score (80%) and students' academic growth (20%). The performance scores are converted to a 100-point scale and then used to determine a school performance grade of A, B, C, D or F. Of the nearly 30% of North Carolina Schools receiving letter grades of D or F from the state, almost all of them are designated as high poverty schools (Wagner, 2015).

Strong school leadership is essential to school reform and turnaround efforts. Branch et al. (2013) found that that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principal's lower achievement by the same amount.

Research suggests a link between principal stability and student outcomes (Branch et al., 2009). Miller (2009) examined the relationship between principal transitions and student test scores (statewide reading comprehension and mathematics tests at the elementary level and end-of-grade tests at the middle school level) in North Carolina schools. She found that principal transitions were associated with changes in student achievement. Test scores in the first two years of a new principal's tenure were low, compared both to prior scores under the old principal and ensuing scores under the new principal. Student performance began to increase, returning to pre-transition levels, by the end of the fourth year under the new principal.

Investigators have studied the connection between school leadership and achievement and have found that not only does school leadership matter but also it is second only to teaching in its impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Branch et al. (2013) declare that the demands of leading high poverty schools, including but not limited to higher teacher turnover, fewer financial resources, and less than desirable working conditions, increase the importance of having an effective school leader.

North Carolina ranks last in the nation, for principal pay. Under the state's pay structure, some teachers are paid more than assistant principals (Hinchcliffe, 2016). The lack of competitive principal pay is handcuffing districts in recruiting highly effective leaders to the state. Further, there is high need to provide children in high poverty low performing schools with an opportunity to have access to a high quality education. An educational economic disparity

exists in many Northeastern, North Carolina counties where administrative supplements are often much lower compared to suburban areas in North Carolina (“NCDPI”, 2016). The issue is not only one of low principal salaries, but that the pay differential between principals and experienced teachers in the building is often negligible (Hinchcliffe, 2016). Therefore, the monetary benefits of serving as a principal often don’t outweigh the additional time commitments and stress associated with the position.

Several studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions (Farkas et al., 2001). This is a significant problem in Northeastern, North Carolina where working conditions are a heavy consideration for aspiring leaders given the significant number of districts with high poverty, low performing schools that descend upon almost every county. Analyses of principal shortages have identified the pressures of new accountability systems, expanding responsibilities, reforms removing principal tenure, and inadequate compensation as some of the factors discouraging individuals who are certified for administration from seeking or remaining in principalships (Wallace, 2007).

Principal turnover is also a major hurdle affecting North Carolina Schools. Miller (2009) found that half of North Carolina principals left their schools within four years. The average school during the 12 years of her study was led by approximately three different principals. There was substantial variation across schools in the number of principal transitions; some schools had a single principal, while others had seven principals. A growing body of research denotes that a high level of principal turnover presents critical challenges for schools and that the stability of the principal provides continuity to school improvement efforts when principals remain in a school for at least five years.

Researchers have surmised that additional compensation may be especially important for retaining principals at the most challenging schools (Mitgang, 2003). Further, most analysts believe the incentives need to be substantial before they have an impact on principal recruitment and retention at hard-to-staff schools. Hanushek and colleagues (2001), for example, estimated that the differential would have to be as much as 20 to 50% over comparable positions at higher-performing, less challenging schools.

Responding to the Problem

Policy reform must be embraced by lawmakers in the North Carolina General Assembly in order to address the significant challenges in the recruitment of school principals to the public school system. Further, if the colossal achievement gaps in poverty dense Northeastern, North Carolina schools are ever going to close, attracting and preserving talent to the region is essential to academic growth in the region.

Stakeholder Input and Process

A stakeholder analysis that presents evidence and data will drive recommended policy reform. Policy research only succeeds with the involvement of stakeholders (Majchrzak, 2014). Stakeholders are individuals and organizations that have a stake in decisions made about the policy problem. “Stakeholders include people who suffer from the problem (e.g., poor people without access to affordable health care), people who have resources to apply to the problem (e.g., medical insurance companies), people who make decisions about the problem (e.g., policy makers), and people who will be affected by interventions made to help solve the problem” (Majchrzak, 2014, p. 19). “Engaging and understanding the views of stakeholders is essential in increasing the success of solving problems” (Majchrzak, 2014, p. 41). A synthesis of the existing evidence is critical to the success of the entire policy research process.

Participatory Research and Data Analysis

Participatory research is a bridging strategy of scientific research, spanning the gap that has been developed between scientific and local knowledge. My chosen method of data collection is focus groups. Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and provide a great depth of insight. They also can provide the researcher with useful insights into the world of the subjects being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The advantages of focus groups include the possibility of obtaining primary data through non-verbal channels, as well as, verbal channels and approaching the research area from various perspectives (Dudovskiy, 2013). When well executed, a focus group creates an accepting environment that puts participants at ease while allowing them to thoughtfully answer questions in their own words and add meaning to their individual answers.

Focus groups are group interviews that are structured in a specific way and have well defined goals (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). A focus group is a group discussion conducted with the participation of and 7 to 12 people to capture their experiences and views regarding specific issues closely related to the research question(s). Focus group data collection methods are most suitable for the types of studies where multiple perspectives needed to be obtained regarding the same problem (Dudovskiy, 2013). Individual responses from those who participate in the focus group protocols in this study will be anonymously recorded.

A design memo (see Appendix B) has been created for representative stakeholders (Majchrzak, 2014) that describes the nature of the evidence to obtain, how the evidence will be collected anonymously, the targeted research question and an explanation of why obtaining additional evidence is needed. In addition to the design memo, focus group protocols have been designed as well (see Appendix C).

In addition, to the suggested focus group protocol, I intend to do a public presentation of the research findings and provide an anonymous quantitative survey to participants. A quantitative survey allows the researcher to obtain numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population (Creswell, 2003). In addition to the survey, I intend to add three open-ended questions to the survey to elicit further information relative to the research questions. The quantitative survey (see Appendix D) has a total of eight questions. All information and data that is compiled in this study through both the focus group and quantitative survey process will be anonymous.

The quantitative data acquired through both the focus group and survey process findings will be anonymously collected and analyzed to look for themes that can be transformed into usable statistics. The researcher will perform a content analysis that summarizes the answers from the focus group interviews. In addition, a summary of the quantitative survey responses will also be analyzed for major themes and subthemes. There will be no individual identifying data collected in either the focus group or quantitative survey process as the privacy and anonymity of respondents is of paramount importance. An informed consent to participate in research has been developed (see Appendix E).

The intended audience of invitees to participate in focus groups and in the public presentation of findings are as follows: members of the General Assembly representing Edgecombe County, the State Board of Education representative for Edgecombe County, members of the Boards of Commissioners and Board of Education in Edgecombe County, central office and school based leaders in Edgecombe County Public Schools, as well as teachers and parents in Edgecombe County.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS, NEED FOR POLICY AND PROPOSALS

Presentation of Findings and Data Collection

The design of the overall study included focus group interviews and a quantitative survey. A quantitative survey allows the researcher to obtain numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population (Creswell, 2003). The research findings of this problem of practice were presented at a public forum on November 16, 2017 in Tarboro, North Carolina. Appendix E displays the dissertation research presentation that was provided to public school stakeholders in Edgecombe County, North Carolina. At the conclusion of the presentation, participants were asked to complete an anonymous quantitative survey to provide the researcher with feedback regarding the research and data. The quantitative survey included eight questions (see Appendix D). In addition to the survey, four focus groups were interviewed. The four groups represented were public officials, school administrators, teachers and parents. Each participant in the focus group protocol was asked six questions (see Appendix C).

Description of Participants

The participants included Edgecombe County public officials, school administrators and teachers in Edgecombe County Public Schools, as well as parents with children in the public school system. Twenty-seven stakeholders attended the public presentation of findings and quantitative survey process. Thirty stakeholders participated in the focus group interview protocols. The participants included three elected officials, twenty-four school administrators, nine parents and twenty-one teachers.

Analysis of Data

The quantitative data acquired through both the focus group and survey process findings was anonymously collected and analyzed to look for themes that can be transformed into usable

statistics. The researcher performed a content analysis that summarizes the answers from the focus group interviews. In addition, a summary of the quantitative survey responses was analyzed for major themes and subthemes. The following questions were asked in the quantitative survey:

1. What do you think Northeastern, North Carolina School Districts need to do to recruit and retain effective principals?
2. Please share with me a success story where a principal made an impact on a stakeholder(s).
3. Do you agree or disagree that North Carolina should raise the annual salary of school principals?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principal candidates in Northeastern North Carolina should be paid a signing bonus to work in low performing schools?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after 2 years if they meet exemplar personal and school performance measures?
6. What else do I need to consider about policy development for school leadership reform?

A summary of responses in the quantitative survey process strongly support the need for policy development based upon the findings of the analysis of the research data collected from the study participants.

Survey participants were unanimously in support of increasing school principal salaries (see Table 3). An overwhelming majority of participants (see Table 4) were in support of

Table 3

Quantitative Survey Question 1

Do you agree or disagree that North Carolina should raise the annual salary of school principals?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	27	0

Table 4

Quantitative Survey Question 2

Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principal candidates in northeastern, North Carolina should be paid a signing bonus to work in low performing schools?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	25	2

providing signing bonuses to principals of low performing schools. There was significant support for performance based contract extensions (see Table 5). Additionally, there was united support to pay principals annual bonuses based on high student growth measures (see Table 6). Further, there was universal recommendation for an administrative supplements study by the North Carolina General Assembly (see Table 7). Participants were also asked an open ended question regarding a success story with a school principal. Many referenced the caring and nurturing approaches that school administrators had taken with their children. For example:

Participant 6- my principal goes out of his way to consistently communicate with my family. I have had 4 children attend his school and I could not ask for a more committed leader. I believe that he will do the right things for children. He goes out of his way to make folks feel good.

Participant 19- my child constantly brags about how our administrators go out of their way to come into their classroom every day and check on how she's doing. That means everything to me. A great principal truly loves children and learning.

Participant 21- the school principal sets the tone for the culture in the building. It carries over to all aspects of the school setting. Children know when the adults care about them. That to me means more than any testing results.

Additional recommendations for policy development centered on suggestions around increasing housing opportunities for administrators and teachers within Edgecombe County. A majority of respondents recommended that administrators be required to live within the county to increase community involvement and access to families.

In addition to the quantitative survey, thirty stakeholders participated in the focus group protocols. The following questions were asked in the focus groups:

Table 5

Quantitative Survey Question 3

Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after two years if the meet exemplar personal and school performance measures?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	23	4

Table 6

Quantitative Survey Question 4

Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be paid an annual performance bonus if their school meets high growth measures?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	27	0

Table 7

Quantitative Survey Question 5

Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that the General Assembly should do a study on administrative supplements across the state of NC?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	27	0

1. What do you think Northeastern, North Carolina School Districts need to do to recruit and retain effective principals?
2. Please share with me a success story where a principal made an impact on a stakeholder(s).
3. Do you agree or disagree that North Carolina should raise the annual salary of school principals?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principal candidates in Northeastern North Carolina should be paid a signing bonus to work in low performing schools?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after 2 years if they meet exemplar personal and school performance measures?
6. What else do I need to consider about policy development for school leadership reform?

The focus groups were broken into the following participant groups: Three public officials, twelve administrators, eight teachers and seven parents. The data derived from the focus groups supports policy reform to address the significant challenges in the recruitment of school principals to the public school system. Three questions that were asked in the survey were also asked in the focus group interviews. Similar results were derived.

Focus group participants were unanimously in support of increasing school principal salaries (see Table 8). The vast number of participants (see Table 9) were in support of providing signing bonuses to principals of low performing schools. Several respondents saw high value in principal tenure in a school as well as the need to have positive working conditions for teachers.

Table 8

Focus Group Question 3

Do you agree or disagree that North Carolina should raise the annual salary of school principals?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	30	0

Table 9

Focus Group Question 4

Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principal candidates in Northeastern North Carolina should be paid a signing bonus to work in low performing schools?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	28	2

There was unanimous support for performance based contract extensions (see Table 10). All respondents were able to recount an administrator who had made an impact on their lives or their children's education in some manner. Several administrators in their session spoke of the impact that their peers have had on them and their observations of admirable leadership traits. Finally, several participants were in agreement that local administrative stipends were an area that needed consideration and attention in policy development.

The statistical analysis demonstrates unanimous support (100%) to raise the salaries of school principals in the state of North Carolina. Additionally, 92% of participants supported providing signing bonuses to school principal candidates in northeastern North Carolina low performing schools. Further, 92% of participants indicated agreement with contract extensions for principals after 2 years when meeting exemplar personal and school performance measures. Lastly, 100% of study participants were in agreement with providing performance bonuses to school principals who met school wide high growth indicators as determined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

In consideration of the analysis of research, data derived from a stakeholder analysis and the infusion of policy to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina, I conclude with the need for the development of policy to address (1) An increase in school principal salaries in the state of North Carolina; (2) A recommendation that principals in northeastern, North Carolina low performing schools should be paid a state allotted annual performance bonus if their school meets high growth measures; (3) A recommendation that principal candidates in northeastern, North Carolina be paid a state allotted signing bonus to work in schools that are designated as low performing; and (4) A recommendation that principals in all North Carolina designated low performing schools should be automatically extended a

Table 10

Focus Group Question 5

Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after 2 years if they meet exemplar personal and school performance measures?

	Agree	Disagree
Participants	30	0

contract extension after 2 years if they meet accomplished personal evaluative and school performance measures. These policy reform impacts would result in significantly improved outcomes for students and schools in northeastern, North Carolina. The ability of low performing schools and districts to recruit highly effective leaders would be enhanced dramatically.

Research clearly demonstrates that achievement gaps can be narrowed when effective school leadership is in place (Branch et al., 2013). Additionally, the state would be able to attract more highly effective leaders to North Carolina as well as into the profession. Further, with the evidence based research demonstrating the impacts on effective principal tenure, contractual extensions would create conditions for long term sustainability and reform change (Miller, 2009). Lastly, I would expect the number of principal candidates in low performing schools to increase based on higher income potential and financial rewards for improving growth performance in schools (Mitgang, 2003).

Policy Proposals

In consideration of the analysis of research and the infusion of policy to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense Northeastern, North Carolina, I conclude with the need for the development of policy to address and ameliorate these issues.

Each of the aforementioned policy proposals will be submitted for review and consideration to the Central Carolina RESA (CCRESA) which includes 18 current superintendents representing Central and Northeastern, North Carolina. In addition, the policy proposals will be submitted to the Northeast (NERESA) which is affiliated with 14 LEA's in Northeastern, North Carolina. Further, all policy proposals will be submitted to the members of the General Assembly representing Edgecombe County and the Edgecombe County Board of Education.

Policy Recommendation 1

An increase in school principal salaries in the state of North Carolina. North Carolina ranks last in the nation, for principal pay. Under the state's pay structure, some teachers are paid more than assistant principals (Hinchcliffe, 2016). The lack of competitive principal pay is handcuffing districts in recruiting highly effective leaders to the state. Further, there is high need to provide children in high poverty low performing schools with an opportunity to have access to a high quality education. In the legislative appropriations bill of 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly adopted a new school principal salary schedule. North Carolina lawmakers changed how they are compensated, moving away from a salary schedule based on years of service and earned credentials to a so-called performance-based plan that relies on students' growth measures (calculated off standardized test scores) and the size of the school to calculate pay. But the plan's design has produced scenarios that result in some veteran principals conceivably earning as much as 30 percent less than what they earned on the old pay schedules- prompting some to consider early retirements (Wagner, 2017). The new Principal Salary Schedule is outlined in the NC General Statute (see Appendix F).

A principal's placement on the salary schedule shall be determined according to the average daily membership of the school supervised by the principal in the current school year and the school growth scores, calculated pursuant to NC General Statute 115C-83.15(c), for each school the principal supervised in at least two of the prior three school years, regardless of a break in service, and provided the principal supervised each school as a principal for at least a majority of the school year (see Appendix G).

The newly adopted pay model does not account for overall increases in student proficiency. In addition, if the state is going to move to a model that rewards value added growth

measures, there should be a salary increase in years when a school exceeds growth in a single year. Further, when the General Assembly voted last session to increase teacher pay, it changed the salary schedule in such a way that it fell out of step with the principal salary scale. Thus, one could argue that there is less incentives for teachers to go into public school administration (Granados, 2017). The performance based plan has had the opposite effect in increasing overall salaries of North Carolina Principals.

The lack of competitive principal pay is handcuffing districts in recruiting highly effective leaders to the state. Further, there is high need to provide children in high poverty low performing schools with an opportunity to have access to a high quality education. An educational economic disparity exists in many Northeastern, North Carolina counties where administrative supplements are often much lower compared to suburban areas in North Carolina (“NCDPI”, 2016). The issue is not only one of low principal salaries, but that the pay differential between principals and experienced teachers in the building is often negligible (Hinchcliffe, 2016). Therefore, the monetary benefits of serving as a principal often don’t outweigh the additional time commitments and stress associated with the position.

Policy Recommendation 2

A recommendation that principals in northeastern, North Carolina low performing schools should be paid a state allotted annual performance bonus if their school meets high growth measures. In addition to the new principal salary schedule, a principal bonus schedule was approved by lawmakers in the summer session. One of the bonuses is based upon the performance of the school under the principal for the previous two school years. Unfortunately, principals who exceeded growth in both years are not eligible. Thus, principals who have been highly effective in increasing student growth measures for two consecutive years are not

rewarded in this new system. Further, there is no consideration of a performance based bonus for principals who exceed growth in low performing schools. Low Performing Schools in North Carolina are defined by the NC General Assembly and are based on the School Performance Grade and EVAAS growth, “Low-performing schools are those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth" as defined by NC General Statue 115C-83.15.” (G.S. 115C-105.37(a)), and “A Low-performing local school administrative unit is a unit in which the majority of the schools in that unit that received a school performance grade and school growth score as provided in NC General Statue 115C-83.15 have been identified as low-performing schools (see Appendix H).

Policy Recommendation 3

A recommendation that principal candidates in northeastern, North Carolina be paid a state allotted signing bonus to work in schools that are designated as low performing. Several studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions (Farkas et al., 2001). This is a significant problem in northeastern, North Carolina where working conditions are a heavy consideration for aspiring leaders given the significant number of districts with high poverty, low performing schools that descend upon almost every county. Analyses of principal shortages have identified the pressures of new accountability systems, expanding responsibilities, reforms removing principal tenure, and inadequate compensation as some of the factors discouraging individuals who are certified for administration from seeking or remaining in principalships (Wallace, 2007).

Policy Recommendation 4

A recommendation that principals in all North Carolina designated low performing

schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after 2 years if they meet accomplished personal evaluative and school performance measures. Researchers have surmised that additional compensation may be especially important for retaining principals at the most challenging schools (Mitgang, 2003). Further, most analysts believe the incentives need to be substantial before they have an impact on principal recruitment and retention at hard- to-staff schools. Hanushek and colleagues (2001), for example, estimated that the differential would have to be as much as 20 to 50% over comparable positions at higher-performing, less challenging schools. North Carolina § 115C-287.1. Method of employment of principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and directors needs to be amended to reflect hiring practices as well as continued employment practices (see Appendix I).

If a superintendent decides not to recommend that the local board of education offer a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract to the school administrator, the superintendent shall give the school administrator written notice of his or her decision no later than May 1 of the final year of the contract. The superintendent's reasons may not be arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory, personal, political, or prohibited by State or federal law. No action by the local board or further notice to the school administrator shall be necessary unless the school administrator files with the superintendent a written request, within 10 days of receipt of the superintendent's decision, for a hearing before the local board. Failure to file a timely request for a hearing shall result in a waiver of the right to appeal the superintendent's decision. If a school administrator files a timely request for a hearing, the local board shall conduct a hearing pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 115C-45(c) and make a final decision on whether to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract.

If the local board decides not to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or

extended school administrator's contract, the local board shall notify the school administrator of its decision by June 1 of the final year of the contract. A decision not to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended contract may be for any cause that is not arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory, personal, political, or prohibited by State or federal law.

North Carolina General Statute 115c-287.1 addresses the methods of evaluations of principals. Therefore the following recommendation needs to reflect a signing bonus upon his/her initial contract to serve as the principal of that low-performing school (see Appendix J).

If a superintendent decides not to recommend that the local board of education offer a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract to the school administrator, the superintendent shall give the school administrator written notice of his or her decision no later than May 1 of the final year of the contract. The superintendent's reasons may not be arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory, personal, political, or prohibited by State or federal law. No action by the local board or further notice to the school administrator shall be necessary unless the school administrator files with the superintendent a written request, within 10 days of receipt of the superintendent's decision, for a hearing before the local board. Failure to file a timely request for a hearing shall result in a waiver of the right to appeal the superintendent's decision. If a school administrator files a timely request for a hearing, the local board shall conduct a hearing pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 115C-45(c) and make a final decision on whether to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract.

If the local board decides not to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract, the local board shall notify the school administrator of its decision by June 1 of the final year of the contract. A decision not to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended contract may be for any cause that is not arbitrary,

capricious, discriminatory, personal, political, or prohibited by State or federal law (see Appendix K).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this study was to develop policies to support school leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina. There are many northeastern, North Carolina schools that are in need of school principals who have the ability to lead teaching and learning conditions that result in increased student achievement. School leaders can exert a powerful influence on student outcomes and influence learning by helping to promote vision and goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Strong school leadership is essential to school reform and turnaround efforts. Leadership is a key component to any organization's success but particularly to school environments where teaching and learning conditions are vital to prosperity. Based upon the findings of the analysis of the research data collected from my study participants and information detailed in my review of literature, it was the intention of the study to address the significant challenges in the recruitment of school principals to the public school system.

Ann Majchrzak and M. Lynne Markus in their text *Methods for Policy Research: Taking Socially Responsible Action*, served as the guide for the development of the policy proposal that have been developed. Each of the identified policy proposals will be submitted, for review and consideration, to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education, Office of the Governor, as well as the State Representatives and Senators representing Edgecombe County. School leadership, after instructional quality, is the most significant school-related contributor to what and how much students learn at school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). A high quality leader is an essential component to tackling the heavy number of academic challenges that dwell in northeastern, North Carolina. Without a formal plan to address school leadership disparities, schools will continue to fail, economies will suffer and the equity gap widens.

Recommendation for Further Research

A study on the significant financial gaps that exist across the state of North Carolina with local administrative supplements offers consideration for further research. Many high poverty counties across the state do not have sufficient local economies to compete with suburban school districts with more resources to pay administrative supplements. This creates talent and recruitment gaps that accentuate the identified principal salary issues that have been raised in this dissertation. The lack of salary for administrators significantly handicaps recruitment and retention efforts across the state. This combined with the lack of financial resources to pay administrators competitive supplements in high poverty Northeastern, North Carolina counties serves as a draconian effect in hiring leaders for low performing schools.

Epilogue

As I conducted this study, my beliefs on the importance of school leadership were repeatedly reaffirmed through both the literature review as well as through the voices of study participants. The research clearly delineates the high impact outcomes that an effective school leader can have on teaching and learning. School leadership, after extremely high quality teaching, is the most prominent indicator as to what and how much students learn at school. Even more striking than the research was the deeply compelling stories from stakeholders who believe that the principal can leverage leadership and have a significant impact on student learning outcomes. Effective leaders can propel students and teachers to accomplish more than what's expected of them. They also can influence an entire community by engaging others and creating school cultures that raise the education bar significantly. Inspiration and motivation are hard to measure but they clearly existed in the words of the stakeholders I was fortunate enough to interview.

The thrust for improving the current conditions that communities face in lieu of the leadership, resources and learning gaps that are prevalent in northeastern, North Carolina were as equally discernible. As a school superintendent, I have long felt that the school principal plays the most important role in a school system. While pouring over research for the past three years, I often found myself rejuvenated in my passion for the work that we do as educators. The effectiveness of a school and its leader increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success. In my experiences in twenty-five years in education, I have seen the power of exemplary leadership and how it can ignite a school community. Effective leadership results in performance that goes well beyond what is expected. I believe that school leaders have a moral responsibility to challenge the status quo, demand excellence and enable young students to flourish as scholars who participate in shaping a better, shared future for the world that we live in. Our mission should be to produce students who are culturally aware, can think creatively, and problem solve. Growing enriched scholars who will be lifelong learners equipped to thrive in an increasingly global marketplace is the ultimate goal in education. Leadership is a necessary and vital component if we are going to build schools focused on creating more rigorous and challenging learning opportunities for every child.

This study also accentuated my beliefs that every child deserves an opportunity to have a high quality education regardless of their race, ethnicity, beliefs or background. Schools should promote positive ideals and implore students to take responsibility for their actions and to see themselves as global citizens who can contribute to a more peaceful, just and unending world. All students deserve a comprehensive education that prepares them for success in our interconnected world. A quality education can arm students, particularly those in poverty with an opportunity to flourish in an ever changing society. All students deserve a comprehensive

education regardless of their income level, the poverty in their community or what economic conditions exist in their community. Unfortunately, many students who live in impoverished homes have to attend failing schools that aren't armed with the leadership, resources or capacities to provide students with a sound, fundamental education.

If achievement and equity gaps are ever going to be narrowed in North Carolina, a comprehensive plan to address the current efforts in cultivating school leaders is going to have to be addressed. North Carolina's public schools are at a critical juncture. The facts are glaring and unacceptable. The state is last in the United States in school principal pay. The lack of salary for administrators significantly handicaps recruitment and retention efforts across the state. If the state is going to elevate public school systems over the next several years, then they are going to have to address the talent gaps that are pervasive across many public school systems.

An educational and economic disparity exists across the state of North Carolina. When high poverty communities do not have the local tax base to support proper funding of schools, children ultimately suffer the consequences. Counties with sustainable economies have a significant competitive edge in recruiting school principals. The current reality is that the lowest performing schools need the highest performing leaders. A high quality leader is an essential component to tackling the heavy number of academic challenges that dwell in schools but particularly in northeastern, North Carolina. Without a formal plan to address school leadership disparities, schools will continue to fail, economies will suffer and the equity gap widens. State and local leaders have a moral duty to do what's right for children. The importance of setting the necessary conditions to grow human capital cannot be understated. Recruiting, retaining and developing talented leaders matters in North Carolina public schools.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board

4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682

600 Moyer Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834

Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: [John Farrelly](#)

CC:

[Jim McDowelle](#)

Date: 11/13/2017

Re: [UMCIRB 17-002049](#)

Policy Development for School Leadership Reform in Northeastern, North Carolina

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 11/10/2017. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category #2.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB

#1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418

IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB

#2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: DESIGN MEMO

Dear Public Education Stakeholder,

I am conducting a policy development research study through the East Carolina University Educational Leadership Department titled “Policy Development for School Leadership Reform in Northeastern, North Carolina.”

The statement of the problem is as follows: There are many northeastern, North Carolina schools that are in need of school principals who have the ability to lead teaching and learning conditions that result in increased student achievement. School leaders can exert a powerful influence on student outcomes and influence learning by helping to promote vision and goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Strong school leadership is essential to school reform and turnaround efforts. There is high need to recruit and retain galvanizing leaders in low performing schools. Therefore, the purpose of this problem of practice dissertation is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense northeastern, North Carolina.

In doing participatory research, my chosen methods of data collection are focus groups and a quantitative survey. Your voluntary participation is requested either at a focus group of diversified stakeholders or at a public presentation of findings followed by an anonymous quantitative survey. All feedback and data that is ascertained will be collected anonymously.

The design of the overall study, including focus groups and surveys is intended to ensure that the probability and the magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research is not greater in and of itself than those ordinarily encountered in everyday life or during the performance of routine professional responsibilities of the participants. A schedule of anticipated activities and timelines is below.

Schedule of Research Activities and Timelines

Activity	Day/Time	Location
Public presentation and survey	TBD	TBD
Elected officials focus group	TBD	TBD
School administrators focus group	TBD	TBD
Teachers focus group	TBD	TBD
Parent focus group	TBD	TBD

The findings from this study will provide information on policy reform recommendations to support leadership reform efforts in North Carolina. Thank you so much for meeting and talking with me today. I will share the results of my participatory data research with you on XXXX date.

Sincerely,

John D. Farrelly
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership Candidate

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is John Farrelly and I am a doctoral student at East Carolina University. I am currently studying policy development for school leadership reform in Northeastern, North Carolina.

Today you have the opportunity to participate in a study about this issue. This portion of the study is a focus group interview that consists of six (6) questions. I want to remind you that you can stop the interview or leave at any time. There will be no advantage or disadvantage for your continued participation in the study. All feedback and data that is ascertained will be collected anonymously. I am very appreciative that you are here. Let's go ahead and get started!

Question set:

1. What do you think Northeastern, North Carolina School Districts need to do to recruit and retain effective principals?
2. Please share with me a success story where a principal made an impact on a stakeholder(s).
3. Do you agree or disagree that North Carolina should raise the annual salary of school principals?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principal candidates in Northeastern North Carolina should be paid a signing bonus to work in low performing schools?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after 2 years if they meet exemplar personal and school performance measures?
6. What else do I need to consider about policy development for school leadership reform?

Closing:

Thank you so much for meeting and talking with me today. I will share the results of my participatory data research with you on XXXX date. Thank you again for your participation.

APPENDIX D: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Hello, my name is John Farrelly and I am a doctoral student at East Carolina University. I am currently studying policy development for school leadership reform in Northeastern, North Carolina. Thank you for volunteering to attend my public presentation of the research findings on my topic. As a part of participatory research, I would like to provide an anonymous quantitative survey to participants. A quantitative survey allows the researcher to obtain numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population (Creswell, 2003). In addition to the 5 question survey, there are three open-ended questions to elicit further information relative to the research questions.

I want to remind you that you can stop the survey or leave at any time. There will be no advantage or disadvantage for your continued participation in the study. I am very appreciative that you are here. Let's go ahead and get started!

Question set:

1. Do you agree or disagree that North Carolina should raise the annual salary of school principals? Agree _____ Disagree
2. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principal candidates in Northeastern North Carolina should be paid a signing bonus to work in low performing schools? ____ Agree
_ Disagree
3. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be automatically extended a contract extension after 2 years if they meet exemplar personal and school performance measures? _____ Agree _____ Disagree
4. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that principals in low performing schools should be paid an annual performance bonus if their school meets high growth measures? _____ Agree _____ Disagree
5. Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that the General Assembly should do a study on administrative supplements across the state of NC? _ Agree
_ Disagree
6. What do you think Northeastern, North Carolina School Districts need to do to recruit and retain effective principals?
7. Please share with me a success story where a principal made an impact on a stakeholder(s).
8. What else do I need to consider about policy development for school leadership reform?

9. Please share with me a success story where a principal made an impact on a stakeholder(s).
10. What else do I need to consider about policy development for school leadership reform?

APPENDIX E: DISSERTATION RESEARCH PRESENTATION

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP REFORM IN NORTHEASTERN, NORTH CAROLINA

John D. Farrelly

Introduction

- School leadership can have a significant impact on student outcomes and ultimately alter the course and destiny of lives.
- A highly effective principal can drive teaching and learning efforts to new heights with high velocity, even in the most challenging of school settings.
- To the contrary, a poor performing principal can have an equally damaging effect on student learning, teaching practices and the overall culture of a school.
- In a study on the importance of school leadership, researchers Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin (2013) found that that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount.

Introduction

- When a school is persistently low performing everyone suffers- teachers, students, parents and community.
- The role of the principal is a daunting challenge, particularly in high poverty, low performing schools.
- Children who live in poverty tend to score lower on standardized tests, receive lower grades and have higher dropout rates (Deforge, 2015).
- What magnifies the need for effective leadership even more is the dramatic shift in accountability measures across the country over the past two decades.

Introduction

- While individual teachers affect a small individual group of students, the school principal impacts all students in a school.
- Leadership is a key component to any organizations success but particularly to school environments where teaching and learning conditions are vital to prosperity.
- Having a vision for what success looks like is vital, especially in significant change efforts. However, having the guile, foresight and wisdom to see those efforts through while building leadership capacity and human capital is even more paramount
- In short, effective leadership is multidimensional and a necessary component to school turnaround efforts.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this problem of practice dissertation is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense Northeastern, North Carolina.

Background and Rationale

- Edgecombe County Public Schools is symbolic of many Northeastern, NC districts where impoverished communities and low performing schools are widespread.
- Many students enter school with a "stacked deck" of challenges that require extensive and intensive educational supports.
- School readiness, literacy rates and the significant number of African American males below grade level are among the formidable challenges that school districts face.
- Most NE, NC districts lag behind state averages in areas of reading, math and science. Graduation rates are typically well below the state average.

Graduation Rate Comparison

<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>Edgecombe</i>	<i>NC</i>
All students	79%	86%
Male	73%	83%
Female	84%	89%
Black	80%	83%
Hispanic	76%	80%
2+ Races	67%	83%
White	78%	89%
Economically Disadvantaged	72%	81%
Disabled	67%	69%
Gifted	92%	95%

Leadership Challenges

- More striking in many ways to the significant academic challenges have been the challenges in providing schools with effective leaders.
- Historic recruiting efforts In Edgecombe County have been mediocre as the district has done little to take the necessary systemic steps to create conditions for success.
- An educational economic disparity exists in counties such as Edgecombe where administrative supplements are often much lower compared to suburban areas in North Carolina ("NCDPI", 2016).
- Ineffective leaders are often shuffled off to the next school or position.
- In order to drive needed change efforts, providing every school with effective leaders is top priority.

Regional Challenges

- Many counties east of interstate 95 in North Carolina are plagued by the same academic and societal challenges that loom as a result of impoverished communities.
- Many schools are low performing, with constant adult turnover and an overall lack of instructional resources.
- The ability to effectively address student learning needs is often thwarted by the dollar sign. The negative outcomes for children are vast and perpetual.
- Poor schools and incompetent leaders are reducing the chances of children having an ability to lead rewarding and productive lives.

Regional Challenges

- With state cuts and the abolishment of North Carolina's highly successful Preschool Program "More at Four", many communities in North Eastern, North Carolina have persistent school readiness threats.
- Children from low income families are more likely to have lower test scores and are at higher risk for dropping out of school (Jensen, 2009).
- Supplemental funding to assist at-risk student populations doesn't exist to the level necessary to overcome local economic hurdles.
- The North Carolina county average for local per-pupil expenditure in daily membership in 2014-15 was \$2,027 per student (NCDPI, 2016). The local per-pupil expenditure in Edgecombe County in the same time frame was \$948 per student.
- At-risk students generally need a wealth of more educational and financial support.

Regional Challenges

- Immense teacher turnover rates also plague many North Eastern, North Carolina School districts.
- Studies suggest that students in grade levels with higher turnover score lower in both English language arts and math and that these effects are particularly strong in schools with more low-performing and black students (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).
- Without a formal plan to raise the leadership bar, schools will continue to fail, economies will suffer and the equity gap widens.
- Fundamental change in the recruitment of effective school leaders is critical to short and long term success in closing achievement gaps.

Statement of the Problem

There are many Northeastern, North Carolina schools that are in high need of leaders who have the ability to reconstruct teaching and learning under visionary leadership. School leaders can exert a powerful influence on student outcomes and influence learning by helping to promote vision and goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Strong school leadership is essential to school reform and turnaround efforts. There is high need to recruit and retain galvanizing leaders in low performing schools. The purpose of this problem of practice dissertation is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense Northeastern, North Carolina

Review of Literature

- The impact that school leaders can have on a community are far reaching. An example of this importance is highlighted in a report by the Southern Regional Education Board where it's suggested that "a principal can impact the lives of anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand students during the year" (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011, p.2).
- A principal is a central figure with wide ranging influence on others. A South Carolina study of teachers identified school leadership as the most critical working condition they considered when making decisions about whether to stay at a school.
- Researchers Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) authored a meta-analysis that involved 69 studies involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers. In the study they computed the correlation between the leadership behavior of the principal in the school and the average academic achievement of students in the school to be .25.

Review of Literature

Characteristics of Effective School Leaders

- Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles, ranging from educational visionaries and change agents to instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).
- There are several key practices that set great leaders apart.
- Principals of high achieving schools established clear learning goals as they engaged in "assertive, achievement –oriented leadership" (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982, p. 334).
- Highly effective leaders create data rich cultures focused on individual teacher and student learning data.

Review of Literature

- Situational leadership is a highly desired and necessary trait to have to be an effective principal. The extent to which a principal "is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems is critical" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4).
- Setting a vision that ensures that each student achieves intellectual and personal excellence in conditions where they can flourish is of utmost importance.
- The Center for Comprehensive School Reform (2005) suggests that successful principals focus on three core practices for improving student achievement: (a) setting the direction of a school, (b) developing talent, and (c) redesigning the organization.
- Developing talent is a key driver and a critical area of focus for successful school leaders. Effective school leaders clearly demonstrate that capacity building is a priority for every adult in the school including themselves.

Review of Literature

A New Age of Accountability

- National trends over the past two decades have paved the way for more educational accountability and thus, a changing more demanding role of the school leader.
- Federal and state mandates such as No Child Left Behind have dictated a higher stakes leadership environment that calls for different leadership skills, abilities and practices.
- An increased emphasis on accountability measures has created a broader demand on principal evaluation. Between 1975 and 1990, the number of states with state-mandated principal evaluation increased from 9 to 40 (Snyder & Ebmeier, 1992).

Review of Literature

ESEA

- President Lyndon B. Johnson initially signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law in 1965.
- ESEA authorized state-run programs for eligible schools and districts eager to raise academic achievement.
- While the intent of ESEA was to close those gaps with its emphasis on results, it created greater pressures for administrators.
- Further, it was not coupled with a comprehensive approach to cultivating successful leaders.

Review of Literature

A Nation at Risk

- A "Nation at Risk" was an educational reform report in 1983 authored by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education.
- It's impact was minimal.
- The Nation at Risk recommendations primarily centered on instructional content, standards, time in school, teaching and fiscal support.
- Identified principal leadership skills involved persuasion, setting goals, managerial and supervisory skills but did not include instructional leadership.

Review of Literature

IDEA

- The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 (IDEA) required every state to have in effect policies and procedures to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities.
- IDEA reshaped and added to the responsibilities of the principal as it necessitated demonstrated administrative support for special education.
- Administrators who clearly understood the needs of students with disabilities, IDEA, and the instructional challenges that educators who work with students with disabilities face are better prepared to provide appropriate support (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).
- IDEA has played a large part in the ever evolving need to have more effective leadership in the K-12 educational landscape.

Review of Literature

Goals 2000

- "The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227)" was signed into law on March 31, 1994 by President Bill Clinton.
- The Act intended to provide resources to states and communities with the hopes of ensuring that all students reach their full potential.
- The tenets of Goals 2000 included drug free schools, expecting all children including those from poor and disadvantaged homes to be school ready and unrealistic competencies and standards.
- While the goals were admirable, there were no foundational leadership structures deployed to build a comprehensive plan for leadership success.

Review of Literature

No Child Left Behind Act

- The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, President George W. Bush's education-reform bill, was signed into law on January 8, 2002.
- NCLB's intent was to hold states responsible for testing, accountability, and school improvement. In addition, it also emphasized that students should be grade-level proficient in reading and math by 2014 and schools were required to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) towards this proficiency goal.
- Along with a significant increase in public reporting measures came new individual district, school and principal accountability metrics that have changed the role and evaluative assessment of school leaders.

Review of Literature

No Child Left Behind Act

- No Child Left Behind encouraged the replacement of the principal in persistently low-performing schools.
- While the intent of federal mandates was to increase accountability there was not a conscious effort on investigating the importance of principal quality for student outcomes or the specific practices that cause some principals to be more successful than others.

Review of Literature

Every Student Succeeds Act

- The House of Representatives as well as the Senate have recently passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- ESSA holds states and school districts accountable for the growth of all students.
- While the mounting measures of school accountability and testing have greatly affected various stakeholders, the school principal has carried the brunt of those higher expectations.

Review of Literature

Shortage of Leaders

- Analyses of principal shortages have identified the pressures of new accountability systems, expanding responsibilities, reforms removing principal tenure, and inadequate compensation as some of the factors discouraging individuals who are certified for administration from seeking or remaining in principalships (Wallace, 2007).
- Several studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions (Farkas, Johnson, & Folen, 2001).
- This is particularly in Northeastern, North Carolina where working conditions are a heavy consideration for aspiring leaders given the significant number of districts with high poverty, low performing schools that descend upon almost every county.

Review of Literature

Shortage of Leaders

- The North Carolina General Assembly joined more than a dozen other states in 2014 in adopting A-F school letter grades for schools. Of the nearly 30% of North Carolina Schools receiving letter grades of D or F from the state, almost all of them are designated as high poverty schools (Wagner, 2015).
- The shortage on leaders has many impacts on student outcomes and quite often on the talent or lack thereof in the teaching force.
- Keeping school leaders in place for multiple years—and improving their performance—has a positive effect on student outcomes, particularly in high-poverty schools.
- High-poverty schools often face multiple disadvantages in attracting and keeping qualified leaders.

Review of Literature

Leadership Challenges in North Carolina

- North Carolina ranks 50th in the nation, including Washington, DC, for principal pay.
- The lack of salary for administrators significantly handicaps recruitment and retention efforts. This combined with the lack of financial resources to pay administrators competitive supplements in high poverty NE, NC counties serves as a draconian effect in hiring leaders for low performing schools.
- Principal turnover is also a major hurdle affecting North Carolina Schools. Miller (2009) found that half of North Carolina principals left their schools within four years.
- Fuller and Young (2009) found that when principals leave after a year or two, major school improvement efforts are less likely to succeed.

Summary of Literature

- The effectiveness of a school leader increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success as research demonstrates that a principal can impact the lives of anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand students during the year.
- There are several key practices that set great leaders apart including building the capacity of every adult in a school including themselves.
- A new age of accountability has dominated the educational realm in the last two decades as policy and regulatory reforms have led to a greater emphasis on testing, results and leadership performance.
- The lack of salary for NC administrators significantly handicaps recruitment and retention efforts across the state.

Summary of Literature

- The lack of financial resources to pay administrators competitive supplements stifles high poverty Northeastern, North Carolina counties in recruiting leaders.
- Principal turnover is also a major hurdle affecting North Carolina Schools.
- Studies suggest that urban and rural districts, particularly those with a poor track record of student achievement and high family poverty rates, are struggling to fill vacant school principal positions.

Methodology

- The methodology chosen for this problem of practice is policy development.
- The purpose of this problem of practice dissertation is to develop policies to support leadership reform efforts in poverty dense Northeastern, North Carolina.
- Ann Majchrzak and M. Lynne Markus in their text *Methods for Policy Research: Taking Socially Responsible Action*, serves as the guide for the development of the evidence-based policies that I propose are needed.

Methodology

The Critical Need

- The need for state policy reform when it comes to school leadership development is critical.
- Children living in poverty in the United States face some of life's greatest challenges, including the challenge of achieving academic success in school.
- Research shows those who live in poverty in the US as children complete fewer years of schooling, work fewer hours, earn lower wages, and are less healthy (Children's Defense Fund, 2012).
- Poor schools and incompetent leaders are reducing the chances of children having an ability to lead rewarding and productive lives.

Methodology

The Critical Need

- Fundamental change in the recruitment of effective school leaders is critical to short and long term success in closing achievement gaps.
- Research suggests a link between principal stability and student outcomes (Branch et al., 2009).
- Branch et al. (2013) declare that the demands of leading high poverty schools, including but not limited to higher teacher turnover, fewer financial resources, and less than desirable working conditions, increase the importance of having an effective school leader.

Methodology

The Critical Need

- The lack of competitive principal pay in North Carolina is handcuffing districts in recruiting highly effective leaders to the state.
- Filling vacant school principal positions is a significant problem in NE, NC where working conditions are a heavy consideration for aspiring leaders given the significant number of districts with high poverty, low performing schools that descend upon almost every county.
- Researchers have surmised that additional compensation may be especially important for retaining principals at the most challenging schools (Mitgang, 2003).
- Analysts believe the incentives need to be substantial in order to have impact on principal recruitment and retention at hard-to-staff schools.

Methodology

Responding to the Problem

- Policy reform must be embraced by lawmakers in the North Carolina General Assembly in order to address the significant challenges in the recruitment of school principals to the public school system.
- If the colossal achievement gaps in poverty dense Northeastern, North Carolina schools are ever going to close, attracting and preserving talent to the region is essential to academic growth in the region.

Methodology

Stakeholder Input and Process

- A stakeholder analysis that presents evidence and data will drive recommended policy reform.
- Policy research only succeeds with the involvement of stakeholders (Majchrzak, 2014).
- A synthesis of the existing evidence is critical to the success of the entire policy research process.

Methodology

Participatory Research

- Participatory research is a bridging strategy of scientific research, spanning the gap that has been developed between scientific and local knowledge.
- My chosen method of data collection is focus groups. Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and provide a great depth of insight.
- The advantages of focus groups include the possibility of obtaining primary data through non-verbal channels, as well as, verbal channels and approaching the research area from various perspectives (Dudovskiy, 2013).
- Focus group data collection methods are most suitable for the types of studies where multiple perspectives needed to be obtained regarding the same problem (Dudovskiy, 2013).

Methodology

Participatory Research

- A design memo has been created for representative stakeholders (Majchrzak, 2014) that describes the nature of the evidence to obtain, how the evidence will be collected, the targeted research question and an explanation of why obtaining additional evidence is needed.
- In addition, to the suggested focus group protocol, I intend to do a public presentation of the research findings and provide a quantitative survey to participants. A quantitative survey allows the researcher to obtain numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population (Creswell, 2003).
- The intended audience of invitees to participate in focus groups and in the public presentation of findings includes members of the General Assembly, the State Board of Education and representative stakeholders from Edgecombe County.

APPENDIX F: NEW PRINCIPAL SALARY SCHEDULE

PRINCIPAL SALARY SCHEDULE

SECTION 8.3.(a) The following annual salary schedule for principals shall apply for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2017.

2017-2018 Principal Annual Salary Schedule

Avg. Daily Membership	Base	Met Growth	Exceeded Growth
0-400	\$61,751	\$67,926	\$74,101
401-700	\$64,839	\$71,322	\$77,806
701-1,000	\$67,926	\$74,719	\$81,511
1,001-1,300	\$71,014	\$78,115	\$85,216
1,301+	\$74,101	\$81,511	\$88,921.

SECTION 8.3.(c1) Subsection (c) of this section applies to the 2017-2018 fiscal year only and shall not apply to subsequent fiscal years.

SECTION 8.3.(d) G.S. 115C-105.25(b)(5c) reads as rewritten:
"(5c) Funds allocated for school building administration may be converted for any purpose authorized by the policies of the State Board of Education. For funds related to principal positions, the salary transferred shall be based on the first step of the base column of the Principal Salary Schedule. For funds related to assistant principal months of employment, the salary transferred shall be based on the first step of the "Teachers Salary Schedule at the salary level for assistant principals. Certified position allotments shall not be transferred to dollars to hire the same type of position."

APPENDIX G: PRINCIPAL SALARY SCHEDULE BONUS

PRINCIPAL BONUSES

SECTION 8.4.(a) The Department of Public Instruction shall administer a bonus in the 2017-2018 fiscal year to any principal who supervised a school as a principal for a majority of the previous school year if that school was in the top fifty percent (50%) of school growth in the State during the previous school year, calculated by the State Board pursuant to G.S. 115C-83.15(c), as follows:

2017-2018 Principal Bonus Schedule

Statewide Growth Percentage	Bonus
Top 5%	\$5,000
Top 10%	\$4,000
Top 15%	\$3,000
Top 20%	\$2,000
Top 50%	\$1,000

A principal shall receive no more than one bonus pursuant to this subsection. The bonus shall be paid at the highest amount for which the principal qualifies.

SECTION 8.4.(b) In addition to the bonuses provided pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the Department shall administer a bonus in the 2017-2018 fiscal year to any principal who supervised the same school as a principal for a majority of the 2015-2016 school year and the 2016-2017 school year if the school was designated by the State Board of Education pursuant to G.S. 115C-83.15(f) as having met expected growth or as having not met expected growth in the 2015-2016 school year and was designated by the State Board as having exceeded expected growth in the 2016-2017 school year. The bonus shall be the greater of the following:

- (1) Five thousand dollars (\$5,000).
- (2) Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for any principal who supervised a school during the 2015-2016 school year with a school performance grade of D or F, as calculated by the State Board pursuant to G.S. 115C-83.15(d).

SECTION 8.4.(c) No principal shall receive more than two bonuses pursuant to this section. The bonus or bonuses awarded to a principal pursuant to this section shall be in addition to any regular wage or other bonus the principal receives or is scheduled to receive.

SECTION 8.4.(d) Notwithstanding G.S. 135-1(7a), the bonuses awarded in accordance with this section are not compensation under Article 1 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes, the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.

SECTION 8.4.(e) The bonuses awarded in accordance with this section do not apply to principals no longer employed as a principal due to resignation, dismissal, reduction in force, death, or retirement or whose last workday is prior to July 1, 2017.

SECTION 8.4.(f) It is the intent of the General Assembly that funds provided to local school administrative units pursuant to this section will supplement principal compensation and not supplant local funds.

APPENDIX H: LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

- Local boards of education shall employ school administrators upon the recommendation of the superintendent. The initial contract between a school administrator and a local board of education shall be for two to four years, ending on June 30 of the final 12 months of the contract. **A principal who signs an initial contract in a designated low performing school as identified in G.S. 115C-83.15 shall receive a signing bonus equivalent to 10% of their annual salary.** In the case of a subsequent contract between a principal or assistant principal and a local board of education, the contract shall be for a term of four years. In the case of an initial contract between a school administrator and a local board of education, the first year of the contract may be for a period of less than 12 months provided the contract becomes effective on or before September 1. A local board of education may, with the written consent of the school administrator, extend, renew, or offer a new school administrator's contract at any time after the first 12 months of the contract so long as the term of the new, renewed, or extended contract does not exceed four years. **Principals of identified low performing schools as defined by G.S. 115C-83.15 who have demonstrated high growth for two consecutive years and who have been evaluated at accomplished levels of performance in each standard on the North Carolina Principal evaluation tool, shall have their contracts renewed for a four period of time.** Rolling annual contract renewals are not allowed. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the filling of an administrative position on an interim or temporary basis.
- The term of employment shall be stated in a written contract that shall be entered into between the local board of education and the school administrator. The school administrator shall not be dismissed or demoted during the term of the contract except for the grounds and by the procedure by which a teacher may be dismissed or demoted for cause as set forth in G.S. 115C- 325.4.
- If a superintendent intends to recommend to the local board of education that the school administrator be offered a new, renewed, or extended contract, the superintendent shall submit the recommendation to the local board for action. The local board may approve the superintendent's recommendation or decide not to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract.

APPENDIX I: HIRING PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPALS

§ 115C-287.1. Method of employment of principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and directors.

- All persons employed as school administrators shall be employed pursuant to this section.
- Repealed by Session Laws 2013-360, s. 9.6(d), effective July 1, 2014.
- For purposes of this section, school administrator means a:
 - Principal;
 - Assistant principal;
 - Supervisor; or
 - Director, whose major function includes the direct or indirect supervision of teaching or of any other part of the instructional program.
- Repealed by Session Laws 2013-260, s. 9.6(d), effective July 1, 2014.
- Local boards of education shall employ school administrators upon the recommendation of the superintendent. The initial contract between a school administrator and a local board of education shall be for two to four years, ending on June 30 of the final 12 months of the contract. Principals who are assigned to a low performing school as identified in the case of a subsequent contract between a principal or assistant principal and a local board of education, the contract shall be for a term of four years. In the case of an initial contract between a school administrator and a local board of education, the first year of the contract may be for a period of less than 12 months provided the contract becomes effective on or before September 1. A local board of education may, with the written consent of the school administrator, extend, renew, or offer a new school administrator's contract at any time after the first 12 months of the contract so long as the term of the new, renewed, or extended contract does not exceed four years. Rolling annual contract renewals are not allowed. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the filling of an administrative position on an interim or temporary basis.
- The term of employment shall be stated in a written contract that shall be entered into between the local board of education and the school administrator. The school administrator shall not be dismissed or demoted during the term of the contract except for the grounds and by the procedure by which a teacher may be dismissed or demoted for cause as set forth in G.S. 115C- 325.4.
- If a superintendent intends to recommend to the local board of education that the school administrator be offered a new, renewed, or extended contract, the superintendent shall submit the recommendation to the local board for action. The local board may approve the superintendent's recommendation or decide not to offer the school administrator a new, renewed, or extended school administrator's contract.
 - (d) Repealed by Session Laws 1995, c. 369, s. 1.
 - (e) If the superintendent or the local board of education fails to notify a school administrator by June 1 of the final year of the contract that the school administrator will not be offered a new school administrator's contract, the school administrator shall be entitled to 30 days of additional employment or severance pay beyond the date the school administrator receives written notice that a new contract will not be offered.
 - (f) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-360, s. 9.6(d), effective July 1, 2014.

- (g) An individual who holds a provisional assistant principal's license and who is employed as an assistant principal under G.S. 115C-284(c) shall be considered a school administrator for purposes of this section. Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, a local board may enter into one-year contracts with a school administrator who holds a provisional assistant principal's license. Nothing in this subsection or G.S. 115C-284(c) shall be construed to require a local board to extend or renew the contract of a school administrator who holds a provisional assistant principal's license. (1993, c. 210, s. 6; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 677, s. 16(a); 1995, c. 369, s. 1; 1998-220, s. 16; 1999-30, s. 3; 2003-291, s. 1; 2013-360, s. 9.6(d); 2014-115, s. 65.)

APPENDIX J: SIGNING BONUSES FOR PRINCIPALS

§ 115C-287.1. Method of employment of principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and directors.

- All persons employed as school administrators shall be employed pursuant to this section.
- Repealed by Session Laws 2013-360, s. 9.6(d), effective July 1, 2014.
- For purposes of this section, school administrator means a:
 - Principal;
 - Assistant principal;
 - Supervisor; or
 - Director, whose major function includes the direct or indirect supervision of teaching or of any other part of the instructional program.
- Repealed by Session Laws 2013-360, s. 9.6(d), effective July 1, 2014.

APPENDIX K: HIRING PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPALS

- Repealed by Session Laws 1995, c. 369, s. 1.
- If the superintendent or the local board of education fails to notify a school administrator by June 1 of the final year of the contract that the school administrator will not be offered a new school administrator's contract, the school administrator shall be entitled to 30 days of additional employment or severance pay beyond the date the school administrator receives written notice that a new contract will not be offered.
- Repealed by Session Laws 2013-360, s. 9.6(d), effective July 1, 2014.
- An individual who holds a provisional assistant principal's license and who is employed as an assistant principal under G.S. 115C-284(c) shall be considered a school administrator for purposes of this section. Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, a local board may enter into one-year contracts with a school administrator who holds a provisional assistant principal's license. Nothing in this subsection or G.S. 115C-284(c) shall be construed to require a local board to extend or renew the contract of a school administrator who holds a provisional assistant principal's license. (1993, c. 210, s. 6; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 677, s. 16(a); 1995, c. 369, s. 1; 1998-220, s. 16; 1999-30, s. 3; 2003-291, s. 1; 2013-360, s. 9.6(d); 2-14-115, x. 65.).

